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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BRIDGEWATER'S FAREWELL VISIT TO
BRONG-AHAFO REGION

C O R R E C T C O P Y

11. (U) SUMMARY: During her farewell tour of Brong-Ahafo and Ashanti Regions, Ambassador Pamela Bridgewater paid a farewell call on Brong-Ahafo Regional Minister Ignatious Baffour-Awuah April 29. Baffour-Awuah briefed the Ambassador on political and economic development activities in the Region, as well as the NPP chances in the upcoming elections. Brong-Ahafo stretches across central Ghana and is a major agricultural region. END SUMMARY.

2.(SBU) Baffour-Awuah stated that the election "would be hotly contested," and said that the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) would need to establish good reasons to return to power. Asked to comment on the recent resignation from the NPP of Alan Kyerematen, who had hoped to be the party's presidential nominee, Baffour-Awuah said that Kyerematen "must have had issues." Baffour-Awuah noted that he had supported Kyerematen, believing that Ghana needed a competent, younger generation of leaders who understood the need for trade and investment. (NOTE: There have since been media reports that Kyerematen has agreed to rejoin the NPP. END NOTE.).

13. (U)On April 29 Regional Minister Baffour-Awuah had received the NPP nomination to run as a Member of Parliament in the Sunyani West constituency. The Minister handily won the party primary, garnering 110 of 113 ballots cast. (NOTE: Sunyani West is a safe seat for the NPP-- it won in 2004 by 7,000 votes, and Baffour-Awuah should reach parliament in December. The Brong-Ahafo Region in 2004 elected fourteen NDC and ten NPP parliamentarians. The President appoints regional ministers, who do not need to be MPs. END NOTE.).

14. (U). Baffour-Awuah told Ambassador Bridgewater that the Chinese sponsored Bui Dam hydro-electric project was progressing well. Concerns related to soil conditions at the dam site were being addressed, and various studies completed. He said that the Government was working on resettlement issues involving land owners displaced by the project. The Minister noted that construction of the dam is expected to begin soon.

15. (U). Baffour-Awuah noted that Brong-Ahafo Region had forty-nine paramount chiefs (and numerous sub-chiefs). He asked the Ambassador to support programs for training regional and national houses of chiefs, noting that many chiefs lack formal training. He said such training was especially important in the run-up to the December election. (NOTE: Chieftaincy disputes are common in Ghana and sometimes become violent. USAID and PAS administer programs in conflict resolution and negotiation. END NOTE.). The Regional Minister asked that the Embassy not forget to include more remote areas of Ghana when planning programs.

16. (U) The Regional Minister expressed concern over soil depletion, which he felt was having an effect on agriculture. Urban waste management, in Sunyani and other towns, was becoming a problem. He also expressed a hope that Sunyani, the regional capital, could form a "Sister City" link with an American community.

17. (SBU) COMMENT. Baffour-Awuah is a progressive leader working on economic development in his region, and is clearly a strong candidate for the NPP. Politically, Brong-Ahafo is a region worth watching during the upcoming political season. In 2004 it was battleground between the NPP and NDC, with President Kufour carrying the region by 52%, and the eastern part of the region, near Lake Volta, solidly sending NDC candidates to Parliament. END COMMENT.

BRIDGEWATER